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ABSTRACT

The paper describes how the components of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf program contributes to the personal growth of student leaders. Sections individually address the establishment of a student/advisor relationship; the leadership manuals (which offer principles and examples of relevant skills pertaining to planning, implementation, and evaluation); and the leadership retreat. (SB)

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TRAINING STUDENT LEADERS AT NTID

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NTID's principle goal in doing research is to influence the education, training and career placement of deaf citizens through systematic examination of issues related to deafness. As one part of NTID's total research effort, the Department of Research and Development conducts descriptive and experimental research. Research findings are used in the development of programs and materials in the areas of learning and instruction, personal and social growth, and career development of deaf students. This document was developed in the course of an agreement with the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

TRAINING STUDENT LEADERS AT NTID

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What does it take to be a good leader? Student organization leaders at NTID are finding out as they participate in a unique leadership development program. Although the program is still being revised and evaluated, Deaf American readers who are involved in leadership training may profit from the experiences we are having with the program.

Until now, few well-documented efforts have been made in the area of leadership training for college students, hearing or deaf. Most training programs are short-term workshops for adults who are already employed in managerial positions. Since the needs of middle and upper level managers are so different from the needs of most deaf college students, NTID began to develop a leadership program in 1976. One of the first steps was to identify the need. In order to do this, all student leaders and their advisors were given a structured interview. These interviews showed that both advisors and student leaders saw a need for more direction in leadership development. Once the need was established, NTID conducted an extensive program search and literature review to find quality programs that were already in use. We found none that fit our situation. Therefore, the department of Research and Development prepared a leadership program to meet the specific needs of

NTID student leaders. It was felt that student government presented an ideal framework for teaching leadership techniques that NTID graduates would need as community, business and even national leaders. The program is being used for the first time this year with all active student organizations.

Our approach at NTID has been to encourage guided, successful leadership experience for students to develop skills and confidence in leading groups of peers. The key to that experience is an ongoing relationship between the student leader and a successful leadership model, usually the faculty or staff advisor to the student organization. Supporting the student/advisor relationship is a leadership resource manual for advisors, a leadership workbook for students and leadership retreats for student leaders and advisors. This article will describe how each of the three parts of the program contributes to the personal growth of student leaders.

Establishing a Student/Advisor Relationship

There are more than thirty extra-curricular organizations at NTID, initiated and run by students. They range from the highly structured NTID Student Congress to small, special interest groups like the Women's Athletic Association. Each spring as club leadership changes, the group may elect a new faculty advisor. Often the new student leader does not know how to tap the knowledge and experience of the advisor. At times the new advisor is not sure how much guidance the student needs. The leadership program helps the leader develop a relationship with the

advisor, focus on personal leadership goals, and identify leadership skills which need improvement. One of the goals of the student/advisor relationship is for the student to regard the advisor as a trainer. After helping the leader build his or her own skills, the advisor can then guide the student leader in improving leadership skills among club members. With this "ripple" approach, the leader can become a trainer, and leadership development becomes a self-perpetuating endeavor.

The Leadership Manuals

The leadership manuals comprise the second element in the program. There are actually two complementary handbooks, one for the advisor and one for the student leader. Both manuals present the same materials but the language and detail is tailored to the different roles and needs of its readers. The introduction to the student workbook speaks directly to the student about the value of a leadership development program:

> As a student leader you will have the unique opportunity to improve your own leadership skills. Perhaps this was one of your reasons for accepting a leadership position. But how does a person develop leadership skills? Does something automatically happen after election day that transforms a person into an effective leader? Can a person become an expert in leadership by reading through a book or browsing through this manual? The answer to those questions is obvious: books and manuals are simply tools; the real

teacher is experience....If experience is so important in developing leadership skills, why aren't all leaders good leaders?...Maybe that's because experience can be an unpredictable teacher....In order to gain as much skill as possible in the short time you have as a student leader, you should seek guidance and then attempt to extend similar guidance to other student officers who work under you. Leadership guidance can be obtained from many sources, but one of the best sources is the advisor to your organization.

The introduction to the advisor's manual also stresses guidance:

> If the experience of a leader is to be guided, someone must do the guiding. The only prerequisite that this person should possess (according to the approach contained in this manual) is a background of successful leadership experiences. In most cases this person will be the advisor to student organizations. It is assumed that a staff advisor will be responsible for the leadership development of a small number of students. Once the advisor has established a healthy relationship with the student leaders, this manual will be an aid in helping the advisor guide the experiences of young leaders in the most profitable directions.

The manual is divided into three sections: Planning, Implementation and Evaluation. Within each area are chapters which present principles and examples of relevant skills and include appropriate worksheets for the student leaders to use in their own clubs. For example, one chapter introduces the principles of selecting group goals:

1. encourage each committee member to contribute ideas during the goal selection process
2. write down goals and objectives
3. select goals and objectives that can be accomplished in the time that is available.

The next page is a planning sheet which offers three possible ways to select group goals and a series of questions to guide the process of goal selection. The advisor's manual lists the same principles plus suggestions for discussing goals with the student leader:

Once your goals have been identified, the leader will need to develop the specific objectives for the program. Ask the leader:

1. what are the specific responsibilities of the group?
2. what specific outcomes do they hope to achieve?

Have the leader list all answers to those questions in the workbook. An example of what those answers may look like is:

1. We want to have a weekly news program on T.V.
2. We want to select an outstanding student leader for an award.

We continually emphasize that the manuals are not textbooks. They are intended as a training tool for the advisor and student leader. The planning sheets for students are to be used in actual club meetings. Some leaders have even provided copies of the work sheets for their committee members to use in planning meetings. The advisor's manual offers ideas for advisors to add to their own repetoire when specific problems arise. Among other strategies, role playing is stressed in the manual as an effective exercise to predict problems and consider alternatives to leadership decisions.

As student leaders and advisors use the manuals we are relying on their experiences and suggestions to make revisions. So far the most widely used chapters have been the skill sections like agenda writing, goal setting, budgeting and report writing. Already we have seen positive results in the way student leaders are running their organizations, handling meetings and delegating responsibilities according to the principles and directions in the leadership manual. As students master these organizing skills, we are encouraging them to tackle the abstract parts of leadership, such as group dynamics and decision making.

Leaders Training Leaders

The third component in the leadership program is the leadership retreat. The first retreat was held in May, 1977, to introduce the program and to ease the transition from old to new club leadership. A second retreat in October encouraged participation in the leadership program, use of the manual and a good relationship with the faculty advisor. The retreat also brought student leaders together to share common problems and to learn specific leadership skills. The following outline illustrates how the October retreat motivated student leaders to use the total leadership development program.

The retreat was a solid day of programming for the twenty-five student leaders and twenty staff participants who represented sixteen NTID student organizations. The theme of the retreat was Leaders Training Leaders, emphasizing the ripple effect of advisors training leaders to train club members. The highlight of the program was guest speaker Gary

Olsen, director of the Jr. NAD Leadership Camp. Enthusiastic students joined Gary in identifying components of the leadership acronym SHARE - Sacrifice, Honesty, Attitude, Responsibility, Example. "SHARE" has become the students' motto for the entire leadership program. Most of the day's activities took place in discussion groups of four students, one trained facilitator and one advisor. The advisors stayed with their own student leaders throughout the day to enhance their relationship and to help the student leaders relate the objectives of the retreat to their own organizations. The facilitators introduced the leadership manuals which were then used in each activity during the day. Referring to the manuals in each exercise helped students relate the retreat to the overall leadership program. Each group finished the morning session with a listening skills activity where students learned to objectively summarize group discussion.

After a picnic lunch we reassembled for a staff skit on delegating responsibility. The skit made some humorous points about good and bad delegating techniques and sparked lively exchanges in discussion groups. Later we experimented with a difficult exercise which required students to analyze the roles people play in making group decisions. Some leaders did not understand the importance of group dynamics training and one judged this activity to be "irrelevant to being a student leader." The final workshop was a personal and organizational goal setting session. Student leaders took time to think over the day's activities and then applied new ideas and goals to their own organizations. At the end of the day all participants completed evaluations of the retreat. In their

evaluative comments students expressed appreciation for the retreat and asked for more training in leadership skills. Some typical student comments were: "I am very happy to hear what students say about leadership because being a leader is one of my favorite roles. But I need to learn more about it." "There should be a leadership workshop for everyone. This retreat could be most important to them." "Do the retreat again like four seasons: fall quarter, winter quarter, spring quarter, summer quarter."

Measuring the Effects

We are now conducting follow-up interviews with faculty advisors and student leaders to evaluate the long range effects of the program. We have asked advisors to identify strengths and weaknesses they see in their student leaders and we have asked leaders to measure themselves against the goals they set at the retreat. The advisors who have been interviewed have reported that their student leaders have improved in their ability to delegate responsibility, set goals, and help club members develop better skills - three goals of the retreat. The interviews with student leaders have also provided insights into ways that future leadership workshops might be improved.

Although the leadership program was developed by the staff for the students, leadership development is becoming a student project as well. Since the retreat, the student leaders have taken on responsibility for peer leadership training; NTID Student Congress has planned mini-workshops on leadership for this winter and encourages use of the leadership

workbook among subcommittee leaders. NTID now offers two courses on leadership skills and one faculty advisor is planning an advanced leadership course specifically for student leaders. One benefit of these academic courses in leadership will be the availability of trained students to assume NTID student leadership positions. As leadership development becomes an integrated part of the NTID student experience, students will have a better chance for success both in NTID student government and in the national leadership arena.

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